

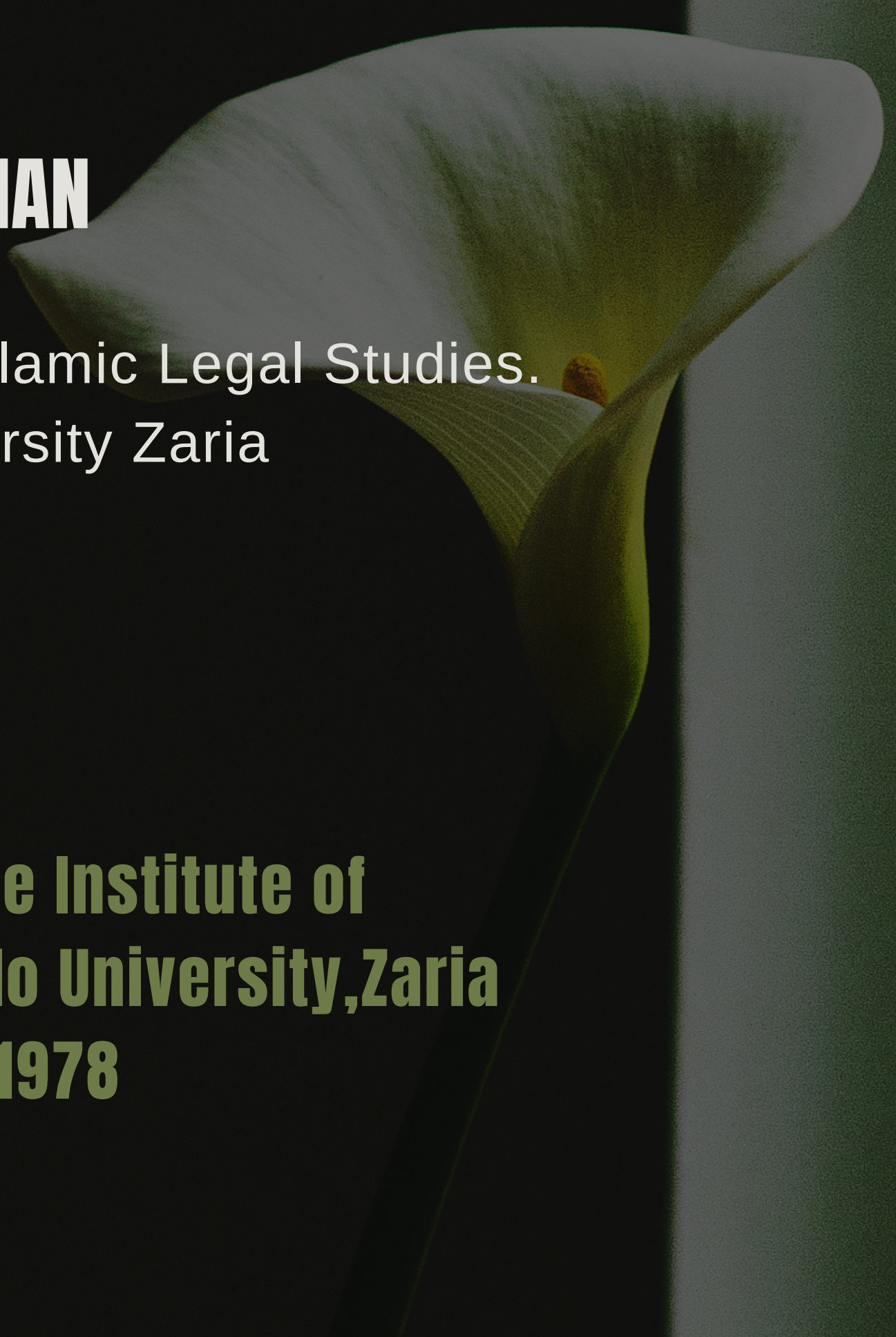
FROM DARKNESS TO DARKNESS

ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN
NIGERIA

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**Lecture Delivered at the Institute of
Administration Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
14th October, 1978**



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The recent lifting of the ban on politics by the Military dictatorship in Nigeria has introduced a new era in political life of the country. There is now a mad rush into politics which is reflected in an proportionate proliferation of political parties of conflicting 'ideological' leanings. The lifting of the ban itself has been hailed in certain political circles as a remarkable achievement of the Military regime and. as the dawn of a new era in Nigerian: an era that promises host of good and beautiful things for Nigeria.

As the mad rush into politics continues, one feels that there is a need to examine the justification for the brand of the political struggle that we have been engaging ourselves in Nigeria, with a view to answering the question if the 'new era' can correctly be called a 'dawn'¹ promising & bright future for us. I shall start by looking back into the Political Struggle leading to Independence, for that was where the

political life of Nigeria, in the form we have it today; really began.

The political struggle in pre-independent Nigeria had one dominant philosophy: Independence. The so-called 'Nationalist' were the vanguards of this struggle had as their dream an Independent Nigeria established on the models of western nations particularly England and America. They wanted to build a Nigeria on such famous Western principles as democracy, rule of law, „ humanism, secularism and social 'justice. They had no other ideals of politics or state organization outside the Western models. This is because of their training. The colonialists made sure that the elite who would be taking over the administration of the country from them were loyal to Western Civilization irrespective of their commitment to Independence. So the 'Nationalists' of pre-Independence days were, as described by Sir Clifford, one-time colonial governor of Nigeria:

"- - - Men born and bred in British administered towns... who in safety of British protection, have peacefully pursued their studies under British

Teachers, in British Schools in order to become Ministers of Christian religion or "learned in the laws of England, whose eyes are fixed, not upon African native history or tradition or policy - - - but upon political theories evolved by European to fit - - - wholly different circumstances."¹

So their struggle was mainly to replace the British administrators and run the affairs of the State with complete independence: but nevertheless in Western fashion. They had no intention of changing the administrative and political machinery the British had already-established; or of committing themselves to an ideology, outside the Western, brands. Nor indeed 'did they see themselves as essentially different in orientation and in attitude to life, from those they wished to replace.

But in fairness to the elite, a number of whom were quite honest 'and dedicated, it seems that, given the

¹ Quoted by Taslim Elias, former Chief Justice of Nigeria in his 'Law in a Davelopino Society' pag-5 52.

atmosphere in which they were operating, they could not have remained totally immune from Western influence or commit themselves to higher goals than they had been taught through their contact with Western Civilization. Close to the period of independence, Western influence had already manifested itself in almost every sphere of life in Nigeria, and more especially in the educational system through which almost all the members of the elite had gone. The effect of Western model of Education on these people is ably presented by the Smythes in their "The Nigerian Elite" as follows:

"Education had long flowed from the numerous and often long-established private institutions known locally as voluntary agency schools, operated by Protestant and Catholic missionaries. Nearly all of Nigeria's contemporary leaders received their first education in such schools and went from them to higher studies elsewhere. The early dominance of education by mission Schools had two corollary implications for elitedom: (1) the educated (and, by

extension, the elite) had had prolonged and direct contact with teachers and other school personnel whose ways and values arose from Western Culture, (2) the elite, as a result, had an opportunity to absorb more of the philosophical and other nonmaterial aspects of the west than did population as a whole, although they could communicate abstract ideas less effectively than they could demonstrate the possession of such material comforts as shoes or refrigerators, more clearly identified in popular mind with Western Progress."²

But despite this Western impact, which was evidently superficial, the elite could not free themselves from the Cultural and Social realities of their native land. Since the impact of The Western ideas transmitted to them in schools and through their contact with Europeans was so immense and the material advantages conferred on them by their

² "Hugh H. Smyth and Mabel K. Smythe: 'The New Nigerian Elite' Stanford University Press (1960) page 60.

qualification to 'European jobs' were too attractive to be ignored, the elite found themselves caught up in cultural ambivalence and frustrating conflict of values and norms. This created a crisis identity, a feeling of inadequacy; and a loss of nobler aim for life: all resulting in a tendency to fixate on these defects.

Thus the politico dominated by the attractive aim of taking places of the British, and to achieve that, the fighters strove to reach the 'height' of the typical English ruler – in dress, speech, behaviour and beliefs. The most qualified, the most respected and the most deserving of the highest places in the political hierarchy were those who knew the largest number of the most difficult words and phrases of English language, who could quote from the writings of renowned figures in English history and who could elucidate, however absurdly, the latest in political, and social ideas of the West, irrespective of their utter ignorance of the ideals that shape their immediate environment.

The struggle achieved its objective in form of an independent Nigeria of a Western model, in 'its essential details. The army, the police, the civil service, the economy, the political structure, the

legal system and so on, were those which the colonialists had established except for very minor modifications.

What the pre-independence political struggle achieved was to place in power those whose ultimate aim was to be in power: to be in the privileged position of the Europeans. It was therefore essentially a struggle for power and not a struggle to establish an ideologically independent state.

The post-independence political struggle was not very much different from the preceding one in terms of the ultimate objective. It was based on the colonial legacy of ideals and philosophy. The politicians wanted power for themselves or their ethnic group and wanted to have larger share in the 'national cake'. Having been 'brought up in materialistic educational system, they saw political post as providing an opportunity to steal public property and indulge in self-aggrandizement.

The main features of the regime established after Independence - now popularly known as the Civilian Regime - can be summarised as follows:

It lacked what can properly be called an Ideology to guide it in its admittedly difficult task of building a new nation. The absence of ideology can be attributed to a number of factors.

First of all, the colonial system of education was based on a deliberate policy of obliterating the history of Africa and indeed of all non-Western peoples, with the aim of attributing to the West all the achievements of mankind. History begins and ends with the white man.

Builders of nations, creators of civilisation, philosophers, Scientists, philanthropists, discovers and so on, were all of European origin, so that any people or nation that "wants" progress and civilization must follow in their footsteps. So what was available to the elite was the body of European ideas which even were not properly understood. The dominant ideas then were those of democracy, humanism, freedom and economic interest. Because the West controlled the flow of ideas in schools and colleges, the ideas of socialism and communism, although of Western origin, were either suppressed or distorted because they posed a threat to Western economic interests. But democracy, humanism, freedom etc.

are not powerful enough to motivate people to fight to death, because they are vaguely defined and have no specific commitment to some aspects of human improvement.

Secondly, the history and ideals of Jihad movements in,-Africa such as those of Usman Dan Fodio, Umar al Futi, Imam Ahmad Al-Mahdi were suppressed or distorted and their works removed from circulation. But with the exception of the Islamic States in Africa, there were hardly any other states established on concrete well-formulated and documented ideological principles to serve as examples for the politicians upon which to establish a new state. The writing of these great leaders, especially Usman Dan Fodio would have given the new leaders an ideology, characterised by disciplined and extra-ordinary commitment to justice, and superior ideas of state organization, as opposed to the life of greed and avarice introduced to them by the West, to which they could commit themselves.

Consequently, the regime established itself on Western popular principles whose implications are not properly understood, and on superficial structures which intensified the acceleration of

corruption and-inefficiency already set in motion by the collective slavery to which the nation was subjected. New principles such as 'one Nigeria' 'One People, One Destiny' etc. were invented to broaden the base of the politicians and to fill the ideological vacuum already in existence. The country was left without a direction, and political life was centred around influential leaders instead of on ideals.

Frustration, uncertainty, confusion and general sense of helplessness became the dominant atmosphere in life, with the result that the social order and discipline were eventually weakened out of proportion. Perhaps, unaware that man loses a sense of discipline and is plunged into internal conflict when he is not provided with an ideal in which he has confidence and the realization of which he could commit himself, the politicians came to believe that the disintegration of social order and discipline was caused by lack of commitment to 'national unit'. So they intensified the cry for 'national Unity' which meant nothing more than 'unity' in corruption, in theft, self-enrichment and in the superficial structures of Western society. Unity as

such is not an end: it must be a means towards a purposeful end which is worth the lifetime commitment of man. But even then genuine unity can only be achieved by an ideology with a spiritual base.

The second feature of the Civilian Regime was the absence of Will-define moral principles for the nation. This feature is indeed the result of the absence of an ideology, if by ideology we mean a set of principles that seeks to guide the totality of the activities and behaviour of a given human organization. Consequently ideas of morality were vague and undefined, with the result that there was no yardstick to measure the behaviour of the rulers. This gave them the opportunity to steal public fund part of which they distribute to their family and also to the poor people as charity; and the license for free indulgence in excesses and luxury, and to live a life of contradiction and inconsistency.

Morality as such requires that man should live above the world, that is, that he should see his life as a struggle in behalf of certain set of goals. When these goals are those at the 'other-world' (i.e. Al-Akhira) the desire to achieve those goals override the

worldly, personal or selfish interests. In such a situation, it would be highly objectionable for the individual to enrich himself from the public funds or to fail to strive to promote the collective welfare of the society. It would be unnecessary for him to struggle for power for its sake, for power in this world per se, does not confer an automatic privileged position in Al-Akhira. Power is sought when the individual feels that he could best achieve the goals of Al-Akhira, i.e. Allah's pleasure, mercy and success therein, through it, otherwise, the struggle for leadership is meaningless, if not destructive. God Himself has made it clear that the bliss of Al-Akhira is not for those who seek power in order to get an opportunity for self-indulgence, corruption and egotism. He says in Qur'an: "As for the Abode of the Hereafter, We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption. The sequel is for those who are disciplined." (28: 83).

The third feature of the Civilian Regime was a lack of vision for a future Nigeria. Vision itself depends on the concept of the world, of man, and of life. When the world is seen as simply a 'shop' whereby you can only buy the best thing when you have the heaviest

purse, wealth becomes the criteria for greatness and influence in the society. In such a situation, the interest of the nation is forgotten when it conflicts with opportunity to be rich. It is easy then for people to collaborate with the enemies of the nation in whatever way, if that will provide a way to get the best out of this 'shop'. But when the world is seen as a 'farm' from which you reap only what you sow, this will create tendency to try to sow the best so as to obtain the best, especially when one is also reminded that this 'best' to be obtained is in respect of Al-Akhira. God's eternal reminder to man is in respect of the world is this: Lo! We have placed all that is in the earth as an ornament thereof that we may try men (to see) which of them is best in conduct. After that, we shall make all that is therein a barren mound." (18:).

Also, when man is seen as merely an animal, it would be foolish to believe that he would not be aggressive, or devoted to merely eating and drinking, and indiscriminate sexual practices. It would also be futile to hope that he would think seriously of his future beyond the popular song: 'eat, drink and be marry, for tomorrow you will be no

more'. It will also be wrong to assume that he would make sacrifices on behalf of others. And so on. But when man is seen as God's own representative on earth, he thinks of himself as representing the highest ideals of existence.

And when life is seen as an end itself there is no need then to expect man to sacrifice any of the good things that sustain that life for others; for where else is he going to be repaid? But when life is seen as a step towards a superior ultimate enduring existence, in which man's worth will be determined by the quality of what he gives to others, as opposed to what he acquires for himself, man can be expected to make the utmost sacrifice on behalf of his fellow beings. As a reminder to those who see the present life as an end in itself, God says in the Qur'an:

“Know that the life of this world is only play, and idle talk, and pageantry, and boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children; as the likeness of vegetation after rain, whereof the growth is pleasing to the husband-man, but afterward it dries up and you see it turning yellow, then it

becomes straw. And in the Hereafter there is grievous punishment, and (also) forgiveness from Allah, and His good pleasure, whereas the life of this world is but matter of illusion.” (57: 20)

It is thus the vision of man, his life and his world, in other words, the world-view, of a particular people that determines the type of Society that they will establish for themselves, for it is this vision that gives man the sense of mission to which he dedicates his life. When I say that there was no vision of a future Nigeria in the early political days, and indeed up to the present time, I mean that there was no vision of a better Nigeria besides a Nigeria of material competition, of greed and struggle for power and influence. It is therefore not surprising that the struggle for political power dominated the scene: and struggle for power for its own sake has its consequences. Such a struggle generates a tendency for compromises as a necessary aspect of politics: I mean a compromise in principles and ideals. It thus creates a politics of opportunism and treachery. Also when power is sought for as a goal, it puts the individual in a situation in which he has to

bribe in order to get to power: and to bribe requires money, perhaps, more than one's legitimate means. It also places the individual in a position in which he has intimidate, blackmail and even eliminate his rivals. This creates tension, suspicion and frustration in political life.

The fourth feature is the educational system whose interest is to produce 'Scholars' and 'Intellectuals' who are loyal to Western Civilization and who would therefore be incapable of thinking of social, political, economic and moral reforms outside the Western models. The dominance of that educational system is responsible for the absence of superior social reformers besides apish, delinquent agitators who would want to replace one Western system with another, and the absence of ideas of a Society other than the replicas of already corrupt and degenerate societies of the West.

Thus the period of the Civilian Regime could be regarded as a period of darkness, despite the presence of honest, dedicated and well-meaning individuals. The political and social ideas and institutions were built upon a false structure: and so it crumble to pieces.

The Civilian Regime was replaced by a military dictatorship which promised to return the country to order and discipline and reconstruct the society. This promise was greeted with enthusiasm in various sections and by various interests in the country, and indeed for varying reasons. It seems that the 'Military intervention' as it was called brought back some hope in the minds of some people: the hope of a new era of peace and order in the country.

But the main problem which was not immediately realized was that the Military itself was grossly ill-equipped for the new role upon which its leaders were setting themselves – the role of building a nation that had been corrupted and weakened by a false system. The Military itself had also underrated the nature of the task ahead of it. Building of a nation involves more than setting up magnificent houses and wide roads or ruling by decrees.

Building a nation involves first and foremost an ideology, which is to direct the totality of society's life, and which is to serve as a motivation for commitment and dedication on the part of the members of the society or nation. It involves also the existence of a particular group which set itself with the utmost

dedication upon a struggle to establish a society on the basis of that ideology. It also involves an intensive ideological education of the people, with a view to involving them directly in nation building.

The Military did not have the idea of any ideology beyond loyalty to the so-called military tradition because it was not established under an ideology but was meant to serve the interest of colonialism. The ideas infused in the minds of the military men were those of service either to the rulers or to the state irrespective of ideals and principles.

The shortcoming of the Military became a real problem for its administration. It was left with no option but the failed civilian set-up and a stress on 'national unity' out of proportion. It had no clear-cut program for nation-building other than sporadic announcement of 'measures' and 'plans' which were often abandoned or replaced by other ones before completion.

And the Military administration, or Military Regime, did not grasp the real problems of the country so as to know how to solve them, it relied more and more and on force, intimidation and autocratic decisions to solve essentially human problems. The much

proclaimed problems which the Military undertook for solve were: corruption, poverty and injustice. Programmes for establishing an 'egalitarian' society were drawn up; promise were made for an end to corruption and so on; but all ended up in vain.

But to put an end to corruption, one has to know why there is corrupts on in the first place, and to know this requires the understanding of human nature. Corruption, strictly speaking, arises from the moral state of man is disturbed, or weakened or confused either through a wrong system of moral education, or by the influence of the Society. Man becomes what he is by virtue of the type of education or upbringing he receives and the type of Society in which he lives. This is because human nature is made in such a way that it can be made to tilt either to the good side or the bad one, depending upon what aspect of his qualities are stressed in his training. It is clearly stated in the Qur'an that man's nature is "inspired ... with conscience of what is wrong for it and what is right for it" (91:8) and the choice of either of the two is entirely the responsibility of man. Man has the capacity to undertake high and noble task in the interest of his

fellow men or his society: he can make the highest sacrifices and take the most daring risks provided that a set of goals in which he has confidence, are set before him.

But he can be inclined to cheap life when his society does not set before him goals beyond his biological desires. I have earlier said that the elite did not attempt to build a nation on any moral principles. So there were none for the Military men. And the Military men themselves were trained in British Military tradition, which places some importance on immoral conduct as an essential aspect of Military life. Moreover, a typical soldier, under this traditions is an ignorant man whose competence is judged only by strictly Military duty, which is mainly shooting and destruction. In the absence of any understanding of why there is corruption at all, the Military regime, despite its power, remains incapable of eradicating it, and became even submerged in the dark sea of corruption itself.

Similarly, injustice arises when the proper status or man is not understood for the way man treats a fellow human being and the way he behaves in the Society depend largely on what he conceives of

himself and his fellow as human beings. If man sees himself as responsible to an ultimate Authority, and sees his role as that of a custodian and executor of God's universal law, and sees his fellow human beings as equals deserving the same respects which he desires for himself, it will be difficult for him to create obstacles in their way of self-fulfillment and self-realization, for he will see himself as duty-bound, by virtue of his status, to stand for-justice at all costs, and will see his fellows as deserving to be justly and fairly treated. Injustice becomes widespread in the Society because of men's lack of proper conception of themselves and their individual, and collective role as human beings. In the Nigerian Context, the military regime did not and could not provide an atmosphere in which people could think of themselves as responsible to an Ultimate Authority, because the question of God had long been excluded in the 'national life' and in education. Neither did the Military man themselves see themselves as men responsible God or as duty-bound to execute His Laws. They made their own decrees and ruled by them. And in a Society where

responsibility to God is weakened, the strongest becomes arrogant and the weak frustrated.

Poverty also involves the mode of acquisition of wealth and its distribution. It becomes acute when the wealth of a particular people is either controlled by those who are not interested in their welfare, or by a few powerful ones among them. Poverty can also be intensified when acquired wealth is spent on valueless pursuits and false living. Poverty can only be minimised when a just system of acquisition and distribution is in operation, and this would involve, not only the economy, but also the belief, the morals and politics of the people. The Military men did not see the justification for taking such an independent and hard course, partly because their courage as fighters has more to do with the battle field rather than in a revolutionary economic and social struggle. It is therefore not surprising that the military men are not equipped with the instrument of nation-building, for the quality of men produced by Western Military Schools is not sufficient for such a task. It is often said, and in fact believed that Military men are disciplined people, and that it is this discipline that makes military administration more effective than the

civilian administration. It is true that our soldiers are discipline when one's conception of discipline is that of drill and obedience to "the last word of command," and no more. But when one sees discipline as the ability to suppress the evil promptings of the individual self, the ability control one's desires and passions, and the courage to pursue and stand by truth and justice, the soldiers are as indisciplined as the civilians.

Indeed, because of the privilege positions they come to occupy in the political arena, and in the absence of any ideological training, the soldiers develop the tendency to see themselves as super-men, capable of doing whatever they like. They rule as they like, thanks to their guns, but the nation suffers in their hands.

In the first place, one is right to say that the spread of corruption was accelerated by the military regime. Secondly, a sort of silent social disorder and disenchantment and even frustration has spread to all the segments of the society and general disinterest in the affairs of the society by individuals is noticeable everywhere. Thirdly, the dictatorship has been destructively extravagant, for it treats the

national wealth as if it were inexhaustible. Fourthly, the events of the last few months show that the value of human life in the eyes of the military men is appallingly cheap. And filthy, because it has a wrong notion of discipline, it made the army an indisciplined and grossly inefficient organization, and made the whole nation a delinquent complex.

Perhaps, the military men might be sincere in their efforts to build a better nation. But the fact remains that their experiment is an abysmal failure, and this is because they lack the essential tools for nation-building. In fact, the enthusiasm people are showing now in politics may be attributed to the fact that people are tired of being ruled by force, or toy a dictatorship that has undermined its effectiveness by self-indulgence, extravagance and disrespect for the citizenry.

(iii)

This brings us to the present- situation: the formation of political parties in preparation for civil rule. What we have seen so far is that the political struggle since Independence has not been good for us. The civilian regime crumbled. The military regime brings us to a confused dark and uncertain situation full of

frustration, agony and suppressed helplessness. It is one of those periods when man sees himself mishandled by a fellow human being as if he were worthless and insignificant. This is often irritating and disturbing.

The coming civilian experiment, assuming it comes about at all, is not going to be different from the first post-independent civilian experiment. It is going to be based on same principles, or rather, slogans. It is also going to be established with same method of political sloganism, blackmail, and cheap and popular promises. The tragedy of the whole situation is that in long period of political struggle there has not arisen a genuinely independent, dedicated and courageous mind to lead the country on the path to sanity. What we have are opportunists, or at best, confused 'leaders' whose only qualifications are that they can talk and meek the public, and have mastered the Western trick of mass mobilization for personal benefit.

The coming experiment is going to be based on the same popular slogans whose implications we are presently going to examine. These are democracy, fundamental rights, social justice and free education.

Almost all the parties so far formed have proclaimed these magic phrases, although one doubts really whether they have considered their full implication.

The democracy these parties are talking about is the Western democracy, although this time, it is going to be the American model, generally referred to as presidential democracy. We have abandoned the British model because it failed us in the First Republic. The question however is: why are we still staunch believers in this magic phrase despite its failure, or rather, despite our inability to implement it successfully? Professor Arnold Toynbee's frank analysis of this issue is worth recalling. He writes:

"The sanctification on the word 'democracy' (among non-Western nations) is not so easy to understand. The immediate explanation of it is doubt, to be found in the prestige of those western European peoples whose colonial empires recently extended over so large a part of Asia and Africa. The Asian and African peoples disliked western rule, of course, and they have been unexpectedly successful in getting rid of it in double-quick time since the West itself gave the opportunity by giving the

Second World War on itself. Yet, while the non-Western subject peoples jibbed against Western rule, they were impressed by the power that enabled a small Western country to conquer and hold down a non-Western sub-continent. The subjects, or ex-subject of the former Western European colonial powers have sought to read the secret of their former rulers' strength in the hope of tapping the source of this strength for their own benefit. In the last chapter of the history of Western Colonialism the leading West European Colonial were France, Britain, the Netherlands and Belgium. By the time they had acquired their colonial empires overseas, all these four West European countries had taken to governing themselves at home by parliamentary regimes with a wide franchise on home front, and they stood for 'democracy' in this usage of the word though they did not stand for it on the colonial front till the end of the colonial story. Meanwhile, these leading European colonial powers were simultaneously democratic at home and

powerful overseas; and their Asian and African temporary subjects consequently constructed a syllogism which Aristotle would certainly have disallowed as being illogical. 'The West European live under democratic political regimes; the West European people are powerful therefore democrat is a source of power; therefore we Asians and Africans must become democratic as well as scientific if we are to attain our objective of getting even with the West in the competition for power and for the advantages that power brings to it.'³

"This argument is obviously unsound. In fact, its mode of thought is not logical but magical. At the same time there may be a logical connection between Western democracy and Western power, though this would be a different one from the connection that Asian and African minds have imagined. The truth perhaps is that democracy, so far from having been one of the sources of the Western people's power, has been one of the luxuries

³ Arnold Toynbee: 'The Present-day Experiment in Western Civilization. Oxford University Press. London 1962 Pages 33 - 34.

that their power has enabled them to afford. The source of their power has been their marriage of technology with, science; the opportunity for their democracy has been the margin of strength, wealth and security which their power, derived from applied science, has created for them. Democracy is an attractive regime for the majority and this is a vast majority in any country - that is subject to the government without having a hand in the government. A democratic regime gives this majority a modicum of control over the government that is genuine, and it also gives them the comforting illusion of enjoying great deal more control than they ever succeed in exercising in reality. This is a political luxury, but it is one that cannot be indulged in unless one possesses a margin of security, wealth and power within which one can play the fool with impunity. - - - It is a political extravagance that is a hall-mark of already achieved power, wealth and security. It is a tax on these assets it is not one of their sources.

Unlike the belief that sciences has been a source of Western power, the belief that democracy has been a source of Western power is a fallacy. ⁴

He writes further:

“The non-Western peoples are not cultivating democracy and science for their own sakes. They not attracted towards them by a recognition intrinsic merit in them. The attraction lies in the real or fancied efficacy of science and democracy as talismans for importing to the non-Western majority the power that has given the Western minority its temporary ascendancy.” ⁵

Apart from this misconception, we also seem to be unaware that the Western model of democracy is a capitalist institution:⁶ we therefore subject ourselves

⁴ Ibid Pages 35 - 36

⁵ Ibid P. 35

⁶ "It is possible that Max Weber was right when he suggested that modern democracy in its clearest forms can only occur under the unique conditions of capitalist industrialization. S.K. Lipset in Some Social Requisites of Democracy' (1959)

to contradiction, when on the one hand we strive to be 'democratic' and on the other, we attempt to run away from capitalism. It will be no news to anybody in future that the coming democracy is also going to crumble in the same way as the first experiment has crumbled, not only because we are attached to it out of some false assumptions, but also because it will simply wear away our energy, leaving us to groan on our indulgence in a political luxury.

The Second magic phrase is fundamental or human right. All the parties so far formed have pledged to respect these rights if voted in power. The Second World War brought into prominence the issue of human right because the way the war was conducted showed that the world had little or no respect for man. Since then this question has grown in importance and popularity. The United Nations starts the race for human rights by proclaiming in 1948 C.E. its famous Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall

strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedom and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member State themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.”⁷

Nigeria has not been left out in this race for the protection of human rights. The 1963 constitution contains provisions guaranteeing human rights. Chapter four of the present constitution is entirely devoted to fundamental rights. But it is clear to everyone that the nations that are most vocal on the fundamental rights are precisely the very nations that are the most flagrant in the violations of these proclaimed rights. The United States of America is foremost in humiliating people on the basis of colour, and in exterminating whole populations simply because of ideological difference. She is most notorious in the violation of privacy of her citizens. The Soviet Union is also not left behind in intimidating, purging and banishing her citizens

⁷ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights - proclaimed by the United Nations on December 10, 1943.

simply because they spoke against the injustices of the ruling class. Despite their violations of these rights, these nations go on proclaiming the rights of man in their constitutions and policy speeches with utter shamelessness. America has included respect for human rights as an aspect its foreign policy. Soviet Union has recently revised its constitution enlarging its Chapter on human rights. In short, is clear that there is not a single nation that genuinely believes in the so-called human rights.

We in Nigeria have not thought of the implication of giving undue emphasis to human rights. We have not asked ourselves the wisdom of trying to establish a society on the basis of rights and freedoms instead of on duties and responsibilities. No reformative or corrective social order has ever been established on rights and freedoms. All successful and enduring social orders or revolutions have always stressed duties and responsibilities both of individuals and of states and have always establish themselves on them. Rights in the eyes of these orders stem from responsibilities and man obtains them in accordance to the extent to which he discharge his responsibilities to the Society. This attitude makes

for a more orderly, disciplined and responsible Society, than in a situation in which everyone quarrels for his rights and privileges.

The chapter on fundamental rights in the new constitution and the promises by the political parties to respect these rights are of no value, for they will not help us to establish a better Society. Not until we are determined to spell out individual and state responsibilities and duties which are binding in absolute terms, can we think of establishing a disciplined and just social order.

The third slogan voiced out by politicians these days is social justice. It is indeed a popular phrase, more so in a society which is anything but just. The phrase has become more attractive due to the continuous emphasis given to it by social critics the world over. Yet it is also an elusive phrase defying any coherent definition or even explanation. The common explanation for it is that its realization would result in providing life- of ease and plenty for all people.

A point which our politicians have missed is that the realization of any real social justice in the Society, if we are to widen its definition to elude the operation of a just social order for man in which the totality of

his life is considered, involves a proper conception of human Society and a suitable legal order to sustain it. It is absurd for anyone to believe that our present society in which certain families arrogate to themselves the right to rule and subject the rest of the people to slavery, in which the wealth of the nation is monopolized by the strong cheats, in which the relationship between people is dominated by material consideration, is worth considering as the basis for promoting social justice, Similarly, the legal order today is hardly satisfactory. The English Law is notorious for condoning, if not legalizing, institutionalized tyranny - social and economic. Therefore any talk of social justice must start with a conception of human society which is radically different from ours, and of a legal order other than the English. The conception of the society should spell out superior moral values for the society which will serve as the basis for human relations as well as the yardstick to measure the worth of men, other than the current material and sensual values. The legal order should be consistent with the moral values of the society, thus conceived. In other words, both the social ideals and the legal order must have

a spiritio-moral foundation if social justice for a human society is to be achieved.

But our politicians are not thinking in these terms. They are thinking of maintaining the so-called traditional institutions in which the mass of the people are seen as subjects and just a few families as masters. They are also thinking of retaining the English legal system, making just minor adjustments. No one needs to be convinced that a belief that one can establish social justice on an unjust and tyrannical social order strengthened by an oppressive legal order, is just an illusion.

Also the political parties are more or less committed at to giving free education at some or all levels. Here again we are faced with the fundamental issue: what education? Even the highest people among the policy makers today and those in charge of education are agreed that the philosophy and objectives of the present system of education are unsatisfactory. Some charge that our type of education, produces only robots in the form of intellectuals. Others charge that it produces an ineffective, corrupt and bankrupt elite that has no respect for his Society and that has no view of better

Society and that is not committee- to superior ideals. Other charge that it produces greedy, selfish lot whose behaviour undermine the very survival of the Society. In fact, in the last few years, when the effects of the present system of education began to be fully felt due to the increase in the number of 'educated' elements, it has become obvious to keen observers that the present system of education cannot establish or sustain a disciplined and efficient Society of brothers with clear objectives and goals, which we are all yearning for. This is so because the educational system we are operating does not conceive of any clear goals for man, nor see man's life as possessing any meaning.

Our educational problem is not just whether or not it should be free - although that it should be free is more consistent with the principles of Islam - the real problem is what system of education should we operate keeping in view the type of Society we want to establish. Sadly enough, it is inconceivable that any of the political parties will think of an alternative system of education for Nigeria that will be different from what we have today.

(IV)

What we have seen so far is that the next political struggle, which has just begun is not going to be different from the former; and so the result will more or less be the same.

This leaves us with the question: what needs to be done?

The answer lies in having an ideological movement that is independent, committed to its ideology courageous, enduring which will sweep away the current institutions and systems and establish a new order with a moral and spiritual foundation. The movement will have to struggle against formidable odds, both within and without, and must be prepared to face the greatest hardships and trials that could ever befall an organization. Its only consolation is that God is on the side of Justice and Truth: and God's universe itself will come to its aid.

13 Dhul Qaidah 1398

14 October 1978.

Lecture delivered at the Institute of Administration
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NOTE 3.

1. Quoted by Taslim Elias, former Chief Justice of Nigeria in his 'Law in a Developing Society' page-5 52.
2. "Hugh H. Smyth and Mabel K. Smyth: 'The New Nigerian Elite' Stanford University Press (1960) page 60.
3. Arnold Toynbee: 'The Present-day Experiment in Western Civilization. Oxford University Press. London 1962 Pages 33 - 34.
4. Ibid Pages 35 - 36
5. Ibid P. 35
6. "It is possible that Max Weber was right when he suggested that modern democracy in its clearest forms can only occur under the unique conditions of capitalist industrialization. S.K. Lipset in 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy' (1959)
7. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights - proclaimed by the United Nations on December 10, 1943.